

# Riparian Restoration: Status

## IN A NUTSHELL, WHERE DO WE STAND WITH RIPARIAN RESTORATION IN NEW MEXICO?.



Simply stated, the soil and water conservation districts have done a good job of treating many large tracts of invasive species such as salt cedar

and Russian olive with the support of the State of New Mexico. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) has

*“New Mexico’s invasive species infestation in its riparian areas did not happen overnight. And the restoration of its waterways, while rapid, must be a staged event also.”*

worked to develop the unique technologies that are essential for successful riparian restoration—and with the assistance of the soil and water conservation districts and others, initiated demonstration sites in a number of locations in the state. Now, the state is staged to take those technologies and apply them appropriately in broader areas. And, it is this final step that needs the efforts today, of all New Mexico entities who are involved with our riparian areas and the resources they support.

For more information call (505)761-4400

- State of New Mexico
- Congressional Offices
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Private Landowners
- Private Non-Profits



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*New Mexico boasts showcase sites* where the **State of New Mexico** funds have been used to extract salt cedar and Russian olives; and NRCS monies, earmarked through the efforts of **Senator Jeff Bingaman**, were applied to do follow-up restoration. The Carlsbad Armanbine Property is a case in point.

The Armanbine Property was originally a plantation in Carlsbad, and its current portion is owned by descendants of Colonel Bujac - an important military figure at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The site is along the famous Carlsbad Christmas tour, and was infested with salt cedar and Russian olive. This infestation was cleared using extraction methods through the **New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts** with **State of New Mexico** funds - and became a prime candidate for a restoration demonstration because of its location and the concern among some residents that where there had been green, there was green no more.

In the winter of 2007, **NRCS's** Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, which has developed the necessary unique restoration technologies, provided and planted 20 cottonwood poles and 100 long stem transplants on the site with the support of the Bingaman earmark. And, this is when what needed to happen, happened. The **Carlsbad Soil & Water Conservation District** saw that the NRCS's technology was working where other efforts failed, and jumped in to do the follow-up that was necessary.

It is worth a moment to explain the NRCS technology and critical Carlsbad Soil & Water Conservation District role.

We all know how to plant a shrub ... right? Dig a hole twice the size of the root ball, fill the hole with water and let it seep in, put the plant in so the top of the root ball is just at ground level, pack soil lightly around the root ball, water, and walk away. And to plant a large area, you enlist a whole bunch of Cub Scouts with shovels. Right? Wrong!

The traditional method of planting shrubs and trees does not work for riparian restoration projects, because riparian plants are dependent on a continuous water source that is only achieved when the roots are in contact with seepage from the stream or river bank. So, how do you achieve this? By deep planting long-stem specimens, not traditional commercial plants,

and using special equipment to auger six to seven foot holes so roots reach the capillary fringe of the water table. This cannot be done with shovels and people power. Once the fledgling restoration species are planted, weeds like seven to eight foot kochia and dense sunflower patches can block out the sun and kill them. Large insect infestations, like cottonwood beetles with a peaking population, can also destroy a newly rehabilitated site. The critical steps the Carlsbad Soil & Water District is providing at the Bujac site are monitoring and weed and pest control for the first two years - after which it will be possible to walk away.

The Carlsbad site is not the only demonstration proving its worth. **Steve Tapia** and **Adolf Serrano** are two ranchers next to I-40 in **Santa Rosa** that have benefited from the **State of New Mexico** and **NRCS** funds. Again their site was planted in 2007, and neighbors are commenting that the land is looking its best since they have lived there. And, **Valencia County** has two demonstrations - the Reinken Bridge site in Belen and Veguita site by Bosque. Specimens at these sites have doubled in size in the past year.

In addition to the several demonstration sites it already has, NRCS is initiating five more throughout the state.

The many entities involved in riparian restoration in New Mexico have individual strengths. **NRCS's** strengths include its ability to develop the necessary restoration technologies and stage demonstrations with the assistance of the soil and water conservation districts and others. The **soil and water conservation districts**, with state support, have the capacity to manage local restoration sites with removal of the invasive species, through restoration planting, and to the follow-up that is necessary for the first two years. The **State of New Mexico** and our Congressional fiscal support have enabled the state to reach the stage it enjoys. And, many others have contributed their efforts - not the least of which are the **landowners** who are practicing good stewardship and want the best for their land.

In a nutshell, the status is that much has been done - and the stage is now set to finish the job with inclusive efforts and support.